

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 606

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT,BE

SUBJECT: NEW FACES IN BELGIAN GOVERNMENT

REF: BRUSSELS 2480

1. THE NEW BELGIAN GOVERNMENT CONTAINS ALMOST ALL THE PARTY STALWARTS WHO WERE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN AND LIBERAL MEMBERS OF THE PREVIOUS LEBURTON CABINET: LINDEMANS, DE CLERCQ, VANDEN BOEYANTS, BAN ELSLANDE, DE SAEGER, VANDERPOORTEN, TOUSSAINT, HANIN, CALIFICE, LAVENS, FRAFE, CHABERT, DE PAEPE, D'HORRE, HUMBLET, OLIVER, AND DEFRAIGNE. ONLY STATE SECRETARY DAEMS (PTT AND FOREIGN TRADE), WHO HAD BEEN CRITICIZED BECAUSE OF THE RTT SCANDAL, WAS DROPPED. THE CABINET FEATURES THE APPEARANCE OF EIGHT NEWCOMERS. THE FOLLOWING IS A REVIEW OF THE CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLYING THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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APPOINTMENTS.

2. ANDRE OLEFFE (ECONOMIC AFFAIRS) HAS BEEN A KEY FIGURE BEHIND THE SCENES IN BELGIAN POLITICAL LIFE. AS PRESIDENT OF THE BANK COMMISSION, WHO PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BLOCKING SOCIALIST ATTEMPTS TO GAIN GREATER CONTROL OVER BELGIAN BANKING, HE ENJOYS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR. A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE MOUVEMENT OUVRIER CHRETIEN, HE NOT ONLY HAS THE SUPPORT OF AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT BUT IS IN FACT STILL THE REAL LEADER OF THE MOC IN WALLONIA. HE HAS CLOSE TIES WITH THE ROYAL CABINET THROUGH HIS FRIEND, CHEF DE CABINET ANDRE MOLITOR, AND IS PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION OF LOUVAIN UNIVERSITY (FRANCOPHONE SECTION). IN ORDER TO REGAIN CONTROL OVER A DEPARTMENT DOMINATED FOR MANY YEARS BY THE SOCIALISTS, A CANDIDATE WAS NEEDED WHO COMBINED ECONOMIC EXPERTISE WITH POLITICAL STRENGTH. OLEFFE SHOULD ALSO BE "ACCEPTABLE" THE LARGELY SOCIALIST STAFF OF THE ECONOMIC MINISTRY, SINCE IDEOLOGICALLY HE IS NOT FAR FROM MANY SOCIALIST VIEWS, ALTHOUGH HE MAY MOVE TO WEAKEN THE POWER OF MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL BAEYENS.

3. MRS. DE BACKER-VAN OCKEN (FLEMISH CULTURE AND FLEMISH AFFAIRS). ALTHOUGH MRS. DE BACKER GOT FEWER PREFERENCE VOTES AT THE POLLS THAN THE TWO OTHER FEMALE CANDIDATES FOR A CABINET POSITIONS, SELECTION OF ONE OF THESE RIVALS, GODELIEVE DEVOS OR MARIS VERLACKT, WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN OVER REPRESENTATION OF THE FARMERS OR THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION (SCC). MRS. DE BACKER HAS TO SOME EXTENT THE SUPPORT OF BOTH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN LABOR ELEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THE SELF-EMPLOYED. SHE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED IN DRAFTING THE CULTURAL PACT AND GAINED ATTENTION WITH HER INTERPRETATIONS IN THE SENATE. OF THE THREE WOMEN IN COMPETITION, MRS. DE BACKER HAD THE GREATEST KNOWLEDGE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS.

4. HERMAN DE CROO (FLEMISH EDUCATION), AT THE AGE OF 37, IS VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE PVV AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE YOUNG LIBERALS AND LIBERAL STUDENTS. HIS IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF PREFERENCE VOTES DEMONSTRATED HIS POPULARITY IN FLANDERS. GIFTED IN USING THE MASS MEDIA, HE HAS BEEN AN EFFECTIVE PARTY SKOPESMAN. DURING THE LEBURTON GOVERNMENT, DE CROO WAS ONE OF THE STRONGEST OPPONENTS OF THE IBRAMCO PROJECT. HIS ASSOCIATION  
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WITH PARTY FOUNDER VANAUDENHOVE AND PVV PRESIDENT GROOTJANS MAKES HIM ONE OF THE FEW POLICY-MAKERS IN THE PARTY.

5. HENRI-FRANCOIS VAN AAL. (FOREIGN AFFAIRS). A LEADER OF THE REORGANIZATION OF THE PSC AFTER THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY SPLIT INTO LINGUISTIC WINGS, VAN AAL HAS BECOME SPLKESMAN FOR FRANCOPHONE BRUSSELS INTEREST. HE SOMETIMES HAS ADVOCATED VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF BRUSSELS MORE RADICAL THAN THOSE OF THE

FDF AND OPPOSED VANDEN BOEYANTS WHEN THE LATTER TRIED TO ORGANIZE A COMMON CVP-PSC LIST IN BRUSSELS. WHEN THE UTCOME OF THE 1974 ELECTIONS WAS SUCCESSFUL FOR THE PSC IN BRUSSELS AND WALLONIA, VAN AAL GAINED CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE AT THE EXPENSE OF VANDEN BOEYANTS AND IS THE NEW LEADER OF THE PSC IN BRUSSELS. IN THE CVP HE IS REGARDED AS A TROUBLEMAKER AND IS ACCUSED OF HELPING UNDERCUT COALITION NEGOTIATIONS AT STEENOKKERZEEL WITH IMMODERATE DEMANDS FOR THE EXPANSION OF BRUSSELS.

6. GASTON GEENS (BUDGET), AS HEAD OF THE CVP-PSC RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, HAS BEEN INVOLVED OVER SEVERAL YEARS IN MANY TOP-LEVEL NOEGIATIONS, ELABORATION OF PARTY PROGRAMS, AND DRAFTING OF GOVERNMENTAL DECLARATIONS. GEENS ENJOYS THE CONFIDENCE OF ROBERT Houben, FORMER CVPPRESIDENT WHO WTILL PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, AND OF PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS.

7. CLAUDE HUBAUX (WALLONIAN REGIONAL ECONOMY). HIS SELECTION STEMMED MORE FROM A LACK OF ALTERNATIVES THAN FROM HIS PERSONAL PROMINENCE. WITH ONLY NINE SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, THE WALLONIAN LIBERALS COULD NOT OFFER A WIDE RANGE OF CANDIDATES. LIEGE PROVINCE HOLDS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE PARTY AND THE FRANCOPHONE CULTURAL COUNCIL, WHILE FORMER MINISTER HANNOTTE REMAINS AT ODDS WITH HIS OLCAL PARTY ORGANIZATION IN THE OTHER LIBERAL STRONGHOLD, HAINAUT PROVINCE. THE CHOICE FELL ON HUBAUX. AS MAYOR OF CHARLEROI HE HAS SHOWN GREATER INTEREST IN LOCAL THAN NATIONAL PROBLEMS.

8. LOUIS D'DHAESELEER (PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION) WAS ONE OF THE PRIME MOVERS IN THE BUILD-UP OF LIBERAL STRENGTH IN EAST FLANDERS. HIS FOUNDING OF THE PARTY'S SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PROVINCE AND HIS ACTIVITY IN TRADE UNION AFFAIRS GAINED HIM CONSIDERABLE POPULARITY AT THE POOLS. HE  
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IS NOT A MAJOR POLICY-MAKER IN THE PARTY BUT COULD PROVE USEFUL TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN COUNTERING SOCIALIST CHARGES THAT THE LIBERALS WILL NEGLECT WORKERS' INTERESTS.

9. KAREL POMA (ENVIRONMENT) COMES TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT AS PRESIDENT OF THE FLEMISH LIBERAL CONFEDERATION, AN IMPORTANT PARTY SUBGROUP WHICH IS ALWAYS REPRESENTED WHEN THE LIBERALS PART-ICIPATE IN GOVERNMENTS. AS A MAJOR PARLIAMENTARY SPOLESMAN ON ENVIRONMENT, AUTHOR, AND HOLDER OF A DOCTORATE IN CHEMICAL SCIENCE, POMA WAS A LOGICAL CANDIDATE TO FILL THE NEW ENVIRONMENT POST. STRAUSZ-HUPE

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